# THE HISTORY OF Johnny Armstrong, OF *WESTMORELAND.*

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# THE HISTORY OF Johnny Armſtrong

## CHAP. I.

Of his following the Wars Abroad in his youthful Days in the Holy Land, in which he learned the Art of Arms, and came off with Succeſs. Of his ſettleing at Guiltnock Hall, in Weſtmoreland; and the noble Entertainment he gave his hundred and ſixty Men.

IN former times when the wars were frequent between England and Scotland, before the two kingdoms was united by King James the Firſt of England, and Sixth of Scotland, the bordering coun-

ties, by reaſon of the in-roads that were made, were ſometimes governed by one, and ſometimes by the other, ſo that during theſe conteſts, there happened to live in Weſtmoreland, a brave man, named Johnny Armſtrong, who made it his buſineſs to keep up the antient and laudable cuſtom CHARITY, ſupplying the poor with food and cloaths, not denying to any that asked him. So that for his liberality he was famed every where, and beloved by all; as well by his rich neighbours as his poor ones. And though he had no free eſtate, yet there was ſuch a providence upon his induſtry, which he uſed many ways: as in cloathing the naked, buying and ſelling foreſts of timber, breeding of cattle, and the like, that his ſtore greatly encreaſed, inſomuch that a great many wondered how he could live at the rate he did, not well knowing how his income ſhould maintain him. For building a long hall on purpoſe, he had a table furniſhed with about eight ſcore men every day, whom he not only fed, but kept cloathed and maintained in all other matters; having horſes and arms upon

an occaſion for the defence of his country, ready for them to mount; taking a great delight in exerciſing them, having been trained up in the foreign countries, in the military art, by fighting againſt the Turks and Saracens for many years, in his youthful days, and having done great exploits, which made him by many people be ſtiled the Chief Champion all throughout the whole North countries, ſo that he kept his borders very much in awe.

His manſion-houſe was called Guilt-nock Hall, and is famed to this very day, upon account of his living there; there being ſmall houſes ſtanding in the ſame place, which carry the ſame name unto this day. However, the larger ruins that ſtill continue, ſhew, That it has been a place of extraordinary great account in former times. For upon their digging pretty deep into the earth, the workmen diſcovered the foundations to be very ſpacious; and it hath alſo been reported for truth, that ſome of the men had the good luck to light upon ſome very ancient earthen pots, which was filled with the coin of divers Kings, who reigned

great number of years before, which money ſerved to enrich both them and their families; inſomuch that it was called, Johnny Armſtrong's Bounty Money. — On theſe things he employed himſelf till he was forty years of age, without entering into Matrimony, though ſeveral rich offers of fair maidens were propoſed unto him. However about this time he began to think of altering his condition, that he might get an heir to keep up the grandeur of his family, and tranſmit his illuſtrious name down to poſterity; he being deſcended from a very antient and honourable family, ſome of whoſe poſterity are living to this day.

CHAP.

## CHAP. II.

Of his being ſettled and living gallantly; of his falling in Love with a Gentleman's Daughter; of the ſplendid entertainment he made; and of his being taken for the King.

HIS thoughts concerning his entering into the ſtate of Matrimony was no ſooner made known to the world, but out of the generous reſpect which the gentry and others in that country had for him, many ſuitable matches were by them recommended to him. But as for riches he did not regard them; but relying on the bounties of providence, he reſolved to chuſe one that was both ingenious, virtuous, and handſome; therefore it was not long before he ſaw one, as he was paſſing through a neighbouring market town, that he imagined he could fancy. And upon a ſtrict enquiry, found ſhe was a gentleman's daughter, though of a mean fortune, her father being fallen to decay, by the great loſſes that he had

ſuſtaining by the raging war between the two nations.

But this made no difference between them, ſo that the gentleman was exceeding well pleaſed that he had procured ſo grand a match for his daughter. And Johnny Armſtrong was as well ſatisfied that he had met with ſo good and virtuous a wife, not without a ſufficiency of beauty to pleaſe him.

The day of marriage being appointed, he promiſed to come and marry her, and then take her home to his houſe. In order to the effecting of which, he new dreſſed his eight ſcore men with the fine purple, interlaid very beautifully with gold and ſilver lace, with ſilver-hilted ſwords, embroidered belts, gilded ſpurs, and plumes of white feathers in their bonnets.

Thus being moſt bravely mounted, he rode, richly dreſſed at the head of them; ſo that the people through all the towns as he paſſed, taking him for the King, with one accord run before him, throwing up their hats and ſhouting: Nor could they hardly be perſwaded by himſelf to the contrary.

His fair miſtreſs was likewiſe of their opinion, when looking out at the window, upon his knocking at the gate, and ſeeing her father's houſe ſurrounded by ſo gallant a company, ſuppoſing it to be the King, who had been hunting, and ſo came for refreſhment, ran and called her father, and ſaid, The King was come to viſit him.

God forbid! ſaid her father, what can we do then? we ſhall be undone, for all the proviſions for thy weding dinner will not be a mouthful for them. Indeed the houſe ſeems very fair and handſome on the outſide, though my mean circumſtances can allow but ſhort comons within: Go down and tell them I am not at home, I am ſick, or any thing to put them off; for it is better ſo, than to entertain them, when we cannot do it; it is better to ſtrain a compliment than to be diſgraced, or at leaſt to faſt for a long time after.

She then went down ſtairs, and peeping thro' the wicket, demanded of them Why they came unto her father's poor houſe? To which Johnny Armſtrong replied, I am come to make you my

wife. So knowing his voice, and looking wishfully at him, she could not believe him till he alighted and saluted her, saying, I am thy Johnny Armstrong. Upon this she throwed open the gates, conducted him in, and then ran up stairs to tell their business; when her father came

down immediately; but when he saw his train he blessed himself; desiring to know why he had brought such a number of men? But on being told there was no more than what usually attended him, his wonder still the more encreased; for though he had relieved abundance of poor people, yet he could not believe he kept so many in that garb.

CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

Of his Marriage, and the noble Entertainment he made; the Number of Servant and Attendants; and of his inviting the whole Country.

NOW matters being at this pass, the pages had the care of the horses, and the men alighted to refresh themselves. Though all the liquors which the old man had in his cellar was not half a morning draught for them; which made the old gentleman her father conclude, That this would be a fast-day instead of a feast-day.

But while these fears and doubts shook him, as though he had been struck with the palsy, all on a sudden arrived Johnny Armstrong's cooks and scullions, twenty-three in number, with a large caravan of all sorts of provisions, ready to dress. After them his buttlers, being eight, with another caravan of wine, cyder, ale, and other liquors. So that

it appeared, when it was taken out to be a plenty ſufficient to have ſupplied any city againſt a ſiege. So to work went the coooks, while he and his intended bride, being bravely mounted rode away to be married, attended by a train of eight ſcore men to the church, making ſuch a grand and magnificent ſhow as that place had never ſeen before. — The people having got intelligence of it far, and near, came to be ſpectators; ſome giving out that Squire Leonard's daughter had married the King; for as he came out of the church, he gave an hundred marks to be diſtributed among the poor, which they imagined none but a King could do.

When they was come home, after the wine of divers nations had paſſed very briskly about, they found the tables covered with all manner of varieties that the ſea, earth, or air could afford, ſuch as fowls, fiſh, fleſh, fruits, and other dainties; and yet above one half was not brought in; ſo that they were obliged, for want of room in the houſe, to have tables ſpread in the court-yard, for the

portet was commanded to make proclamation, that all comers were welcome that day. And thus till night they drank and feaſted plentifully; and then came in muſick and a maſquerade to divert them till bed time; but there not being lodging for a fortieth part of them, the houſe was kept open all night.—Johnny Armſtrong finding the ill convenience of ſtaying there any longer, took leave of his father-in-law the next morning; conveying home his bride in great ſtate and magnificence.—With her he lived happily ſupplying his fathers wants upon all occaſions.

CHAP

## CHAP. IV.

On his carrying his Bride Home, where ſhe is elegantly entertained; of his having ſeveral Encounters with the Old Scots; and a War ariſing between the two Nations, after the Battle of Bannocks Bourn, all Weſtmoreland fell into their Hands.

BEING now at home, he ſettled all things in that country, ſo much to the ſatisfaction of the King of England that his Majeſty ſent him his thanks for the care he had taken in protecting paſſengers from the robbers and thieves, and likewiſe from plundering Scots whom he had made many times to go ſhort home; for they abominably hated him, and many times laid their deſigns to entrap him, but he always having his guard of merry blue blades with him, always came off with flying colours. And during theſe tranſaction, his wife was delivered of a fine boy, which very much rejoiced his parents hearts, for holding a

feaſt at his chriſtening, all the country were welcome; ſo that the fame thereof rang both far and near.

In the midſt of their joy he had a private information, that a party of ſoldiers were come within ten miles of his ſeat, ravaging and plundering the whole country; ſo that the inhabitants fled before them. On this he and his men mounted their ſteeds, and went and gave them battle; and ſoon overthrew them with ſo terrible a ſlaughter, as but few of them returned to Carliſle (which old garriſon the Scots held in thoſe in days) to tell their defeat.

Theſe and ſuch like encounters and depredations, cauſed an open war to be declared between the two nations, which had been over for ſome time, until King Edward of England marched againſt Scotland, and entered it with a mighty army, but very ill-diſciplined. For the Scotch hiſtorians tell us, they were an hundred thouſand, beſides women, lackies, and other ſervants, many carrying their whole familes with them to ſettle, when Scotland was overcome. But Fortune was againſt the Engliſh, for in one battle at

a place called Bannock's Bourn, Robert the Scotch King utterly vanquiſhed them with a much ſmaller number, killing upwards of ten thouſand of them, with the Earl of Glouceſter, and two hundred Knights and Squires. On the Scots ſide about ſix thouſand were killed, with a great number of Noblemen and Gentlemen. So that they ſtill purſuing their conqueſts, won all Cumberland Weſtmoreland.

Our famous Johny Armſtrong was not at this battle, but he was ſtruck with the greateſt admiration and ſurpriſe, and would fain have perſwaded the retreating Engliſh, unto whoſe aſſiſtance he was immediately coming to rally again, and face the enemy. But wanting a warlike prince to lead them, it proved ineffectual; and he found himſelf conſtrained to become a ſubject to the King of Scotland, or leave his fine habitation; which his father-in-law would perſwade him to do: But all their ſolicitations proved ineffectual. They farther told him that conſidering how much he had done againſt that nation, he might well expect that now it was in their power, they would

remember him: But he being of an undaunted reſolution, told them what he had done was according to the laws of nations, and what every generous enemy could not but approve of. Beſides in a very little time all might be won back by the Engliſh, and that neither fear nor terror ſhould make them remove from a place which he ſo dearly loved.

Thoſe words put them to ſilence, and he ſtill kept on keeping open houſe, and doing all the kind offices that lay in his power, even to the meaner people of either nations, without indifference as no exceptions might be taken, or he be charged with partiality.

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

He being perſwaded to leave Guiltnock-Hall, refuſes it for many Reaſons; and great Commotions ariſing by the landing of the Danes, &c. he is ſuſpected by a falſe Accuſation. The King invites him to Edinburgh, and he promiſes to go.

DUring theſe troubles, the Danes and Red-Shanks, two bloody Northern nations, made great havock in the Weſtern iſles of Scotland, where they had landed; and with them joined ſome of the diſcontented Scots, as well Noblemen as others; ſo that the King knew not whom to truſt; thoſe whom he moſt relied on proving moſt treacherous.

This vexed him, and made him ſuſpicious of his friends, of whom he impriſoned a vaſt number. Then he ſent for the nobility to come and join him; but they all refuſed, leſt they were to fight againſt the Engliſh, who were making preparations to recover what they had ſo ſhame-

fully loſt, or for fear they ſhould be conſtrained to join the Northern enemy; to whom flocked a great many outlaws and idle perſons, who ſuppoſed that in the midſt of ſpoil and plunder they ſhould be enriched with the goods and chattles of others.

Theſe proceedings made many Nobles refuſe to come to him, for fear they ſhould be put in priſon, as others had been before. This made him clap his hand on his breaſt, and looking wiſhfully on thoſe that were around him, with a deep ſigh, he ſaid, O then is Scotland ſo full of treachery, that never a man, from the higheſt to the loweſt degree, dares appear before the King, when he ſends for him to make his appearance.

Hereupon the officers of the houſhold ſtanding up, and then bowing low, ſaid, May it pleaſe your Majeſty, there is one named Johnny Armſtrong, in Weſtmoreland, a valiant and truſty man, whom I doubt not but will do you infinite ſervice. What is he, ſaid the King, with reſpect to eſtate? Why, replies the officer, he lives ſplendidly, gives noble entertainments to all comers; and yet I never

heard he had any land to maintain it. — Then ſaid the King, He muſt live by robbery and plunder; of which there are too many already in the kingdom: But does he keep any men to attend him? — Yes! ſaid the other, he always maintains eight ſcore gallant fellows, bravely accoutred, and when he goes any where abroad they ride with him well armed and mounted.

Whilſt this diſcourſe laſted, in came a Lord, who Armſtrong and his men had before routed at the battle of Bannock-Bourn, retook number of cattle which had been taken from the Engliſh; and afterwards challenged him to ſingle combat, but he durſt not anſwer him. — The King aſked him, If he knew one Johnny Armſtrong, of Weſtmoreland, and what he was? — Know him, ſaid he, yes; and ſo do all your poor ſubjects on the other and this ſide the Tweed. He has been a bitter enemy to his country, and is like to be ſo again, when the Engliſh, who I hear are preparing, makes an attempt upon it. And unleſs your Majeſty can get him into your hands, and deſtroy him, and the reſt of the rebels he

keeps your new conqueſts cannot be ſecured to you.

This malicious report ſo much incenced the King againſt this juſt and brave man, that he reſolved if poſſible, his deſtruction, without ever conſulting farther, purpoſing to go with all his force and fall on him immediately. But that was objected againſt, leſt upon notice of their march he ſhould retire into the Engliſh territories, and ſo become a more implacable enemy. Therefore it was reſolved he ſhould be invited to Edinburgh under pretence of friendſhip, and then he and his train might be cut off without much reſiſtance. — Hereupon the King wrote the following letter unto Johnny Armſtrong:

"WE, having heard much of thy fame, could do no leſs at this time than take notice of one that is ſo greatly beloved by the common people, and may be ſerviceable to us, when things go ſo badly, therefore I will not command, but earneſtly deſire you, on ſight of this letter, to repair to our city of Edinburgh, with your attendants, where you ſhall be hear-

tily welcome. And for your ſafe conduct this our letter, with our royal word and ſolemn promiſe, ſhall be to you a ſufficient pledge and ſecurity.

ROBERT Rex.

This letter was ſealed with the King's own ſignet, which he received as he came from hunting, and having highly treated the meſſenger, and giving him his protmiſe, he diſmiſſed him.

## CHAP. VI.

Johnny Armſtrong goes to Edinburgh, bravely attended with his eight Score Men, notwithſtanding many Preſages to forbid it. His Diſcourſe with the King; with the bloody Battle fought by him and his eight ſcore Men, who were all ſlain but his Page; and of his little Son's promiſing to revenge his Father's Death.

THE valiant Johnny Armſtrong being at this invitation a little puzzled, to think what was the reaſon, and

aſked the opinions of his friends; but as they were as ignorant as himſelf! and as he had promiſed to go, they concluded (all but his wife) that it would be convenient to go.

His commands were not diſputed, for in the morning they roſe with the ſun; and immediately put themſelves in array to march; when on a ſudden the grand luminary, that ſhon ſo bright at his aſſending the horrizon, was overcaſt, and thunder began to rumble in the air; however there being ſome ſigns of its clearing up, he reſolved to ſet forward; but coming to taks leave of his beloved wife and ſon, and giving them many kiſſes and embraces, all on a ſudden he turned melancholy, without being able to give any reaſon for it; but his wife's entreaties and his ſons tears could not ſtay him. —Thus they parted, as they hoped for a ſhort time.

The King no ſooner had notice of it, but he placed his guards to be ready at the firſt onſet; but when he came to ſee him ſo nobly attended, he fancied it was a foreign Prince come to pay him a vi-

ſir: Wherefore, upon his low bowing, the King moved his bonnet to him in a moſt courteous manner: but he was no ſooner certain it was him, but he called him a Villain, Traitor, Enemy to Scotland, and much more of his unexpected language. — Johnny Armſtrong bending the knee to the ground, asked pardon if he had offended his Majeſty; and deſired to know to what end he was ſent for, tendering his ſervice, if it would be accepted.—No, traitor, replied he, I need not thy ſervice; and as for my fair promiſes, they were only to decoy you and your neſt of thieves hither. —— At this, the Engliſhman, riſing up unconcerned, without fear, ſaid, He could juſtify himſelf and his men, in reſpect to the falſe report his Majeſty had received of him and his men. — Upon this, encouraging his men to take example by him, he drew his ſword, and ſtruck at the King with ſuch a fury, that he had taken off his head, had be not avoided it by falling to the ground. — Armſtrong's men ſeeing him engaged, immediately drew, and laid about them, ſo that all the place was ſlippery with the blood; while the

cry aroſe through all the city, as if they had been taken by ſtorm. So that at laſt, three thouſand more coming upon him, the heroick Armſtrong being tired with the loſs of blood, fell to the ground; but calling to his men encouraged them to fight on, for after he had bled a little, he would riſe and fight again. This made them like enraged lions, ſo that heaps of dead bodies barred up the way. —— The King in the mean time retired to a ſtrong hold for ſhelter, and of all Johnny Armſtrong's party only a little page eſcaped to tell the diſmal news.

The mourning of his wife and the country, for his untimely fall was more than can be expreſſed. —— Armſtrong's little ſon, ſitting upon his mother's knee, vowed to revenge his father's death when he became a man; which he gallantly performed.

FINIS.